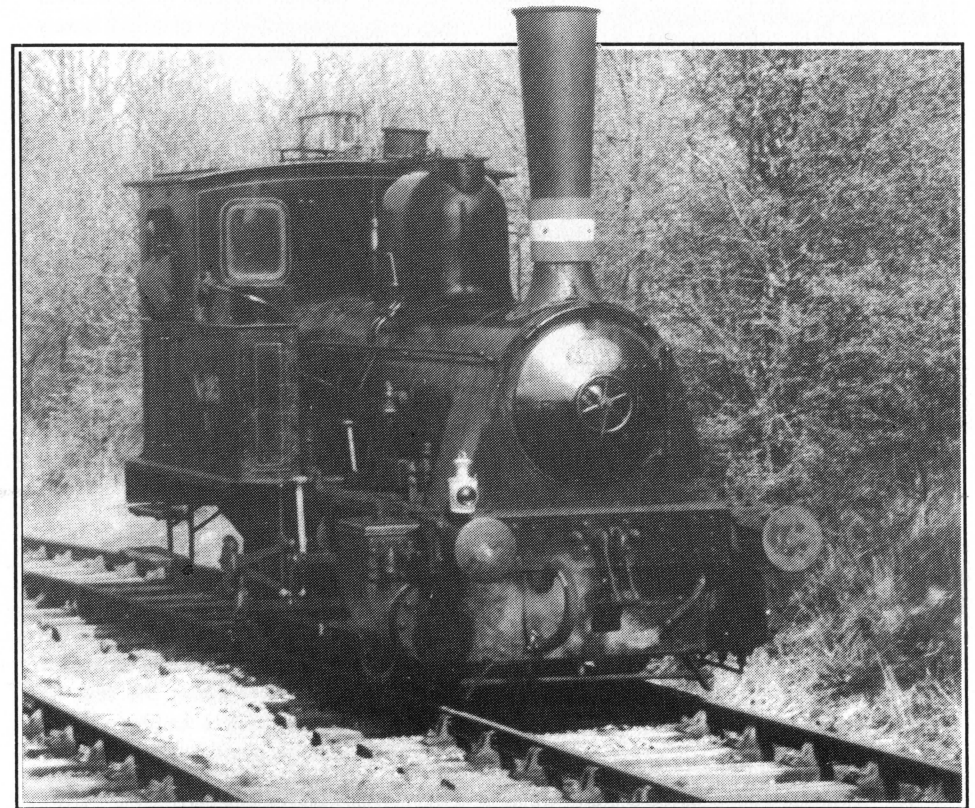


# THE OLD RUN

JOURNAL  
OF THE  
MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST



NO.164

SPRING 1999

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**PLEASE NOTE** For the summer issue at least, there is a **NEW EDITORIAL ADDRESS AND DETAILS** - see opposite column!!!

**John Bridge will no doubt set his own deadline dates, but please send him material for the Summer Issue by the middle of June. The current Editor apologises for the short notice and the lateness of this issue!**

Opinions expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Middleton Railway Trust Ltd, Middleton Railway Association, or the Editor. Many thanks indeed to the members who provided articles, reports and photos for this issue.

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Cover picture: Nr.385 poses on the loop at Parkside, Easter weekend 1999.

Photo: Keith Hartley

## EDITORIAL

Sheila Bye

The first job I did for the Middleton Railway, in 1965-6, was typing up copy for the Editor of *The Old Run*. Twenty years and two Editors later, I had the job again. When the then current Editor, Ian Smith, became Publicity Officer, I became Editor.

Not long afterwards, I also became Historian, which had seemed to be a job mainly completed; I soon discovered that it definitely wasn't. The job also became increasingly demanding as our unique history became better known, and further sources came to light. Now the development of a Museum at Moor Road is underway, there is a need to put displays together, and plan future expansion of displays. A decade's accumulation of notes and illustrations urgently need sorting and cataloguing for archive use, and as display material. Plus I'm 10 years older, much more decrepit, slow, forgetful, and *The Old Run* is always late!

All this is leading up to the fact that this is perhaps the last *Old Run* I will be editing. The Summer issue will be edited - on a trial basis - by John Bridge.

**ARTICLES** for the summer issue should go direct to John at 5 St. Johns Close, Read, Burnley, Lancashire, BB12 7RL, Tel.(01282)774393. His e-mail address is: [john@lazycat.freemove.co.uk](mailto:john@lazycat.freemove.co.uk).

**PHOTOS** should still be sent to me at the old editorial address, and I will forward a selection to John, retaining the rest for our new Museum's Photo Archive - if this is agreeable to the photographer.

I will continue to provide a history article for each issue, and Steve's in-depth reports of work at the Railway will continue also. I hope that other members will supply articles and photos at least as liberally as they have over the past few years, for which I thank you all most sincerely.



An unusual double view of Nr.385, seen with *Sir Berkeley* in the car park on 27th June 1998.  
Photo: Ian Dobson

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

### Steve Roberts

If anybody thought that my comments in the last two issues were somewhat provocative, they were not far from the mark! The prime reason was to invite comment and hopefully a dialogue. To some extent, I have succeeded, albeit not to the extent that I'd hoped. On the subject of hi-vis vests and uniforms, I received a generally supportive letter from Ian Dobson, the content of which is reproduced elsewhere, with Ian's permission.

Both our Editor and Marketing Officer responded on the subject of passenger numbers and I have had at least one verbal ear bending from other quarters! However, the basic point seems to have been missed. Perhaps I didn't explain myself sufficiently! I was trying to make the point that the regular service has now dwindled considerably and we have to rely so much more on special events. Any accountant could make out a very strong case for abandoning the regular timetabled service and just holding special events. Our finances would not suffer, indeed they may improve, and there would be a lot less strain on our volunteers, track and stock. I doubt that anybody wants to take this action and the challenge that I issued is simply to make the regular service worth running, once more. A difficult task, I'll be the first to admit, but one that I hope we can do.

Sheila disagreed with the validity of my comparison with 1974. Just for the record, Easter Saturday 1974 took £43.68 in fares which, using the Retail Price Index, would be just about £265

today so, yes, our fares were much cheaper then. Whilst other costs have risen, I doubt that the cost of a ton of coal has changed by anything like the Retail Price Index from 1974 to 1999 and coal does form the major cost of operating a steam service. The comment about easter eggs is interesting. Yes, we did give them away. If they had that much effect, perhaps we should do it again!

Howard makes several other, quite valid, points, and perhaps I might be permitted to respond. I'm the first to admit that people's Sundays have changed tremendously with the advent of Sunday trading and perhaps we do suffer from this change more than the 'big attractions'. Our Railway is not a 'day out' or even a 'half day'. I don't think that we can ever make the league of the 'days out', but we do stand a chance of reaching the 'half day' league once the museum side and extension have become reality. We can progress the museum without external resources and we must do so.

As regards comparative fares, is the comparison given valid? We give a twenty minute ride which does compare very favourably with, say, a fairground ride but do we want to stand comparison with this? I'd rather compare with Armley Mills, Thwaite Mills, etc., and on a time/cost basis we are expensive. As they say, you can make statistics fit any argument!

Howard did briefly mention footplate experience courses, something that brings in a lot of income to quite a few other railways. Is it worth doing? Probably. Can we do it? I don't know. One of our stalwart volunteers, Douglas Lovely, definitely thinks so and

has produced a paper on the subject. The finances certainly stand up. Can we provide the staff support and, above all, quality, to make it a success?

Well, what do you think? Let's have some lively debate on all the above and much more with lots of letters to the Editor!

## IAN DOBSON'S LETTER

Dear Steve,

I've just read your comments in the latest *Old Run* regarding the attire of staff and I thought I'd share some thoughts with you.

**HV VESTS** I'm with you on this one up to a point. Faded mucky ones are a no-no and should be thrown away by their owners anyway. A Guard working a train and not straying onto the line should not need one at all. If one is needed for wandering around the line in the course of duties then it should be removed once on board - just ask the photographers at any charter! I think they add an air of responsibility to staff but the currency has certainly been cheapened by gricers in recent years, as you say. Shop staff crossing the line should only really use the crossing at the South end of the platform so that's not really an argument. Perhaps there must be some rule devised to clarify the matter.

**STAFF ATTIRE** In this day and age members of the public should expect a polished professional staff, and the days of jeans and a T shirt are over. Whilst I personally always wear a tie and invariably a waistcoat when quarding, this is not always practical. If I may make a suggestion I would say

that a polo shirt with a smart Middleton Railway logo on the breast would appear both smart and professional. It would also be easy to buy three separate colours - one for shop staff, one for Guards etc., and one to sell to the public - thus reducing the cost straight away and also hopefully showing a profit on the saleable ones! As a more interim measure, a standardised name badge available for all staff always gives an air of authority I believe.

Anyway, over to you and Council. I just thought I'd let you have my views for what they are worth.

Ian Dobson

and what about a letter from the Editor?

The basic point I tried to make in the last issue was that the increase in fares between 1974 and 1999 (1000%!) has been far greater than inflation demanded, but that the 1974 fares directly related to a very different Middleton Railway. I still don't believe that our Railway's 1974 statistics can usefully be compared to, or used in conjunction with, our late 1990's statistics.

1974 fares were 20p Adult Return, 10p Child Return, and this attracted many more 'casual' local passengers than now, particularly unaccompanied children (not allowed now, quite rightly). They greatly boosted our numbers on regular service weekends, as did the periodic influx of children coming down from the caravan encampment at Belle Isle to buy crisps and sweets in our shop. Being almost the only passenger Guard at that time, I know what was the typical 'visitor profile', and not a lot came from outside South Leeds. The opposite has been the case for many years now: most people come from further afield making planned visits. (I



believe the Publicity team has some new ways in which to attract larger numbers of local people back to the Railway.)

However, the era when we could operate for those really cheap fares is long gone. Coal is only a part of what has to be financed from our earnings. The upkeep of our present buildings, fittings and equipment must cost far more than the tumbledown wooden hut workshop and the ex-container ticket office/shop ever did, not to mention the wagon and brakevan passenger train. This has to be reflected in the 1999 fares, making them just not as attractive as they were in 1974, for a ride which, albeit taken in greater comfort and safety than then, currently remains the same length, and is normally all we have on offer.

A further factor, not previously mentioned but of real significance, is that in 1974 we still operated a goods train

service for Robinson & Birdsell's, and our goods service profits helped us considerably in keeping those passenger fares so attractively low.

On the point of 'regular' versus 'special event' visitor numbers, I seem to remember that there were very few special events in the early 1970's. In the 1990's, with a variety of special events spread across the season, there perhaps has been a natural tendency for people to come to 'events' in preference to casual visits on regular service weekends.

Basically however, most of our 1974 visitors were attracted by low fares facilitated by different circumstances, and their numbers cannot be used with 1999 fares to make comparisons of profit, any more than we could usefully compare our 1999 fares, profits or visitor numbers with those of the Bluebell Line or KWVR.

Sheila Bye

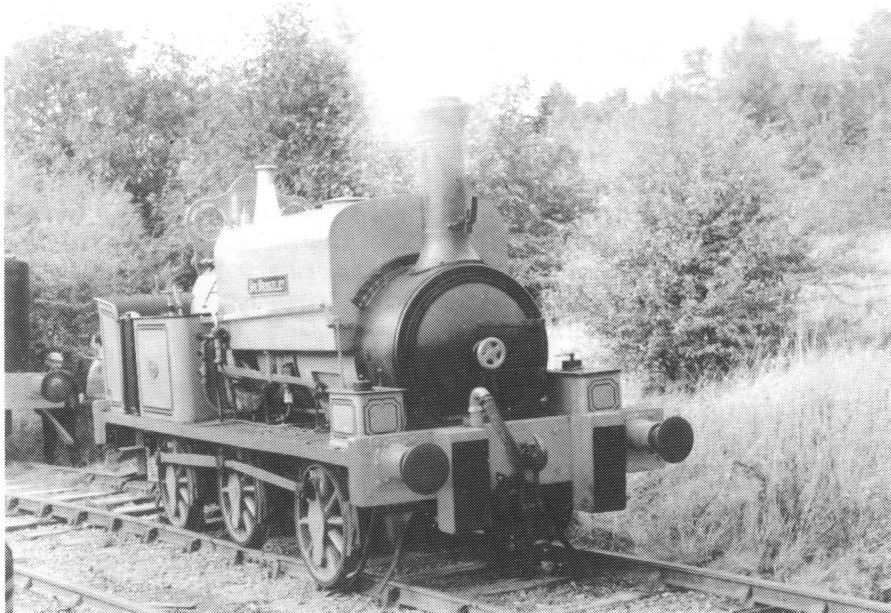


1310 rests at Park Halt during the 1998 Santa Specials. Photo: Ian Dobson



1310 again, caught in a nice light and shadow view of the station yard, 19.12.1998. Photo: Ian Dobson





Our railway celebrated its 240th birthday last September by rudely tipping *Sir Berkeley* off the Park Halt loop (the only portion of modern track on the 1758 alignment). Photo: Graham Smith

## LOCO & YARD NOTES

### Steve Roberts

The relative calm of the winter 'closed season' is a time when we can at least relax and not worry too much about tomorrow. Well, perhaps 'relax' is not quite the right word as there is still an awful lot going on as the faithful few carry on with the many tasks. To find out what we have been doing in the last three months, read on!

**1882 *Mirvale*** Things have not gone according to the plan outlined in the last *Old Run*. The scheme to send *Mirvale* to the North York Moors for repair fell foul of the politics of that line, and this will not now be happening. We are investigating alternative arrangements to have the loco overhauled off site, but are not too

hopeful. Our present plans preclude a 'fast track' overhaul at Middleton, and *Mirvale* may be forced to take a back seat for a while, in which case it is likely to become one of the main exhibits in the museum.

**385** The Danish tank suffered a tube failure on the last day of the New Year 'Thomas'. It has been brought into the works and a replacement fitted. Other works likely to be carried out before Easter are replacement of the vacuum ejector exhaust and a smokebox door baffle. The intention is to nurse 385 through the season to the expiry of its boiler ticket in November.

**1310** The Y7 has spent much of the winter in the workshop, and has been reassembled ready for Easter. However, as its annual boiler exam is due in May, and the loco is going away

during July, it is likely that this examination will be brought forward and carried out before Easter. The wooden cab floor has been renewed.

**1625** Our Cockerill is stored, serviceable, for the winter. No work is presently planned or required.

**67** As usual, work continues steadily on the loco's overhaul. Weld repairs to the right hand tank are now complete and a start has been made on the left hand one. Following upon our experience with the first tank, where we attempted to fit small patches, it is likely that the complete bottom third of the inner plate will be replaced. When the long awaited major shunt of the workshops happens, the cab and tanks will be fitted. The fitting of the tanks will be a temporary one, to enable other work to progress, and they will have to be removed again to fit the boiler.

**1601** As noted in the last *Old Run*, we invited tenders for a new boiler for this loco. Prices varied, from £27,250 to £39,950, in the tenders returned. We are likely to opt for a traditional rivetted boiler at a cost of £34,250, but the order for this is yet to be placed as we are still negotiating the funding package. The money is available from our existing resources, but we are hopeful of addition grant aid and this will not be available if the order is placed before the grant is agreed.

**2387 *Brookes No.1*** The frames have been rewheeled, as indicated in the last *Old Run*. However, due to a technical problem, the owner has decided to lift it again for further work on the driving axleboxes. Meanwhile, the cylinder covers have been removed and the cylinders examined and

declared acceptable. Work on the boiler design continues, and drawings have been submitted for approval. Delivery of the boiler is likely during May.

**2103** This loco has been the subject of much work recently. Following discussions with our Insurance Company Boiler Inspectors, it was agreed that we would remove the tank and cladding to enable a full external examination to be carried out, and a full internal examination by way of the various openings. We are hopeful of an agreement for a five year period of use before we have to remove the tubes for a major overhaul. The boiler has been given a clean bill of health, although a small section of the copper firebox in the fire area was found to be somewhat thinned and will have to be kept under observation. The boiler has been prepared for an hydraulic test, and this will shortly be witnessed by the Boiler Inspector. Meanwhile, work continues in other areas to bring the loco up to an acceptable standard. At the time of writing, new steam pipe runs have been completed for the steam brake and blower, whilst the injector feeds have been partially completed. Still to do is the vacuum ejector steam feed. The vacuum pipework is receiving considerable modification to both improve its design and enable easy dismantling when necessary. The loco is short of a boiler feed clack valve and a Peckett style safety valve. We have produced drawings for a new clack valve, and are presently pursuing the casting of a new one which we will then machine up. In the short term, we will fit two Ross 'pop' safety valves until a second Peckett valve can be sourced.

Some of the existing boiler

cladding sheets are considered unfit for further use, and new steel sheet has been obtained to replace these. Our recently acquired bending rolls will no doubt be christened in the manufacture of these. Painting has taken a bit of a back seat recently, but once the hydraulic test is completed and reassembly begins this task should start in earnest. A target date of the end of May is a realistic one for an entry into service.

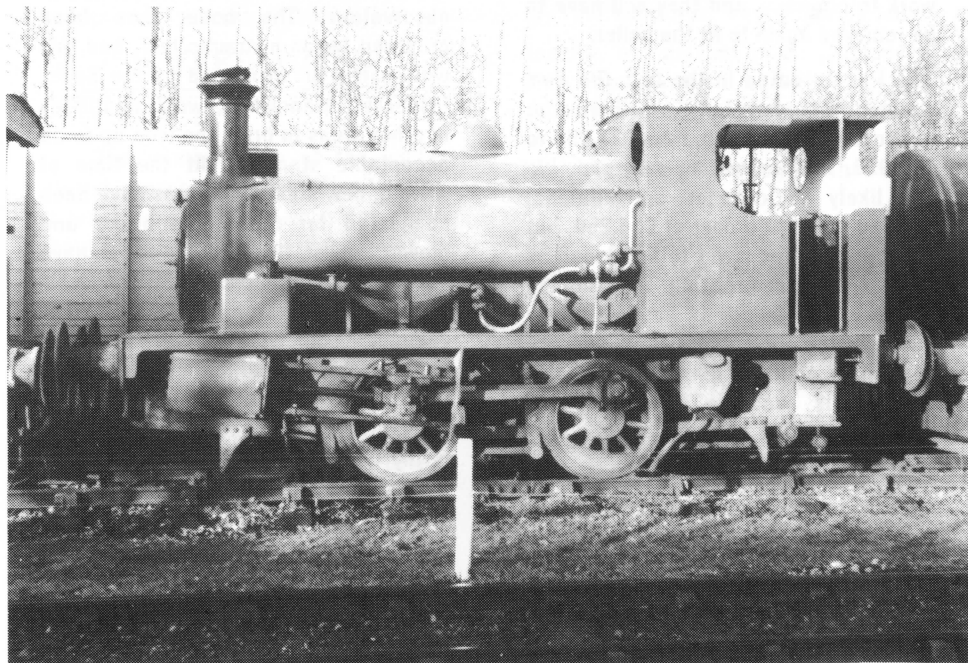
**1210 *Sir Berkeley*** The coupling rods have been re-shimmed to correct the problem created in the rush to have the loco available for the Steam gala (see the last *Old Run*). The annual boiler inspection is due on this loco, and will have to be carried out before it returns to service. As this loco is not part of our own fleet, and is insured

and inspected by a different inspecting organisation from our own fleet, this work has to be arranged through the loco's owners. There are no plans for *Sir Berkeley* to visit any other railways in 1999 so, hopefully, we should have the loco available for the full season.

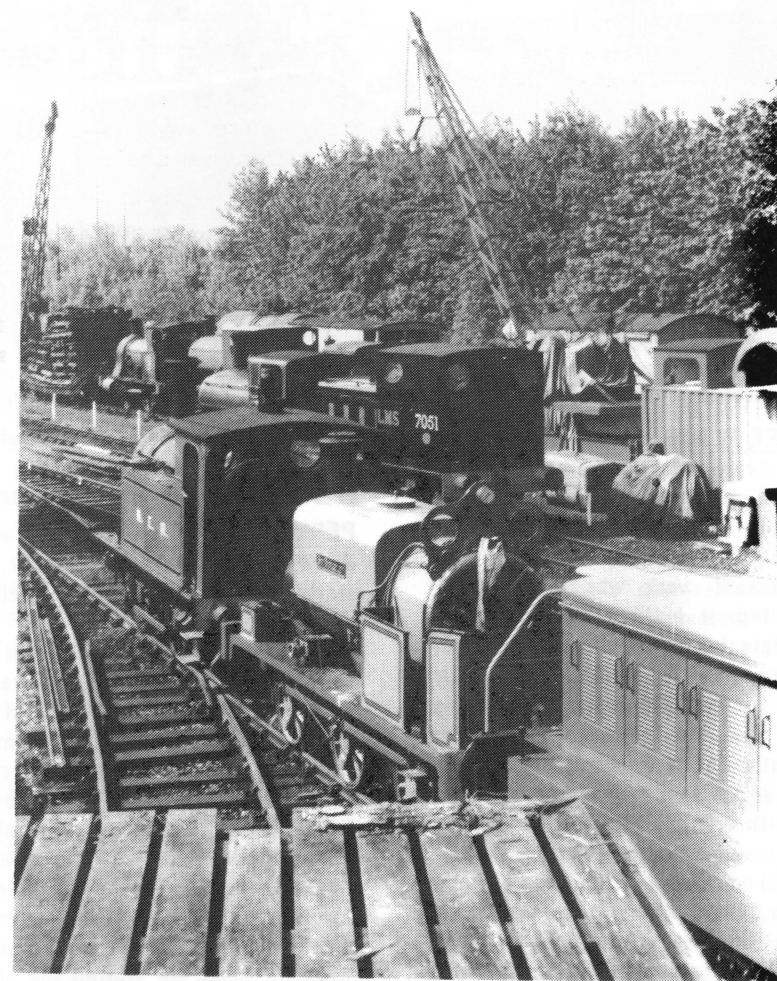
**91** Apart from an occurrence of flat batteries, this Brush diesel has been in regular use on the winter PW trains. It is preferred by the drivers as it has a fully enclosed cab, complete with other luxuries, such as a seat!

**LMS 7051** has had occasional use during the winter, standing in for 91 when required.

As is usual, **138C**, **1786**, **D577**, **D631** & **Rowntree No.3** are available for traffic. All other locos are stored, awaiting repair.



*Henry de Lacy II*, basking in the New Year's Day sunshine. Photo: Ian Dobson



9.5.1998. A year old now, but still a nice view of the yard from *Olive's* roof. Photo: Ian Dobson





Ian Smith draws a large audience for his usual masterly performance as the Fat Controller having problems with *Carroll* and the Troublesome Trucks, 24.4.1999. Photo: Ian Dobson

**FUTURE PLANS** At its meeting on 18th February, the Trust Council debated future loco restorations. It was generally agreed that we should not start on any further locomotives until the present work was substantially completed. It is likely that the next candidate for an overhaul will be our Hawthorn, Leslie No.3860, generally known as No.6. In logical order, this should be the next candidate for restoration as it was last steamed in 1975, which to put it in perspective, means that it has stood at Middleton, out of use, for over one third of its life! This will most likely be followed by good old No.2003 *John Blenkinsop* which was the mainstay of the fleet for many years. With the completion of 67, 2387 and 1601, space can be found for both these locos to enter the workshop and still leave room for other work. No.6 is likely to be a much longer term task

than No.2003 which is thought to require much less work. No final decision has been taken at this stage.

**PERMANENT WAY** As soon as the New Year 'Thomas' Gala was over, work started on the winter relaying programme. This year we have undertaken the renewal of ten 60ft panels of track, the most we have ever done in one winter. The first two Saturdays were occupied in lifting the old track, seven panels on the first day and the remaining three on the second. A JCB was then hired to level the trackbed before the first four panels of concrete were laid in on the following Saturday. Laying in the concrete panels was completed by 6th February, following which we started the steady but hard tasks of ballasting, and lining and levelling. This work continues at the time of writing. Over the last few years we have accumulated quite an

amount of ash from our steam locos. This has been a problem for some time.

As there was quite a dip in the length of track being relaid, we have seized the opportunity to utilise this ash to level out the trackbed and ease the gradient.

Perhaps I shouldn't say this as we have not completed the relaying, but we have had a programme of sleeper replacement over the last five winters and we have only lost three days to the weather in all this time! Boy, have we been lucky!

**CARRIAGE & WAGON** Work continues on the National Railway Museum's 16 ton mineral wagon. The frames have now been completely needle gunned, and painting up to final top coat is proceeding. The steel for the floor and sides is now on site and will be fitted as time permits.

Some winter maintenance work has been done on the coaches, including completing the repaint of the passenger compartment on the brake coach which we didn't have time to do last year.

Our goods rolling stock, to a large extent, has been neglected for many years, and inevitably is deteriorating. Serious consideration is being given to bringing the tool van and LNER brake van into the workshops for a major overhaul. These wagons both have wooden bodies on steel underframes.

Whilst the underframes are in fair condition, the bodies are quite poor. Both vehicles are very important to our engineering operations, and we cannot really afford to be without them. We thus need to turn them around fairly quickly. Is there anybody out there who likes woodwork and would be willing to give a hand with this task?

**PHOTOCOPIER** Photocopying is an ever increasing necessity in our operations. For many years we have relied on the goodwill of members for such facilities. Latterly, we have had the use of a small machine that used to belong to a member. Inevitably, its condition and print quality was becoming poor, and we have investigated alternatives. Thanks to one of our regular volunteers, we have been put in touch with OCE who run a scheme for charities, whereby they provide a copier free of charge and just charge a nominal amount for copies made. The copier we now have is of a much higher specification than we envisaged, having enlargement/reduction, double sided copying, collation, stapling and hole punching facilities.

**ANOTHER LOCO** Well, yes and no! The late Hugh Wainwright, who owned our Cockerill No.1625, also had another, similar locomotive. Apparently three of these Belgian locos were imported into the UK during the 1980's. The third loco is now restored and operating in Northampton. Hugh apparently had an ambition to build a steam railcar with his other loco but had made no progress with this project, and it lay dismantled at various sites. The boiler arrived at Middleton some while ago, but the chassis remained in storage at Whaley Bridge (to be precise, in the old transshipment shed between the Peak Forest Canal and the Cromford & High Peak Railway). Extricating this chassis from the shed was not the easiest thing in the world, and we continually put this task to the back of our job list. However, termination of the lease on the building came at the end of February, and we



had to clear the building by this date. The loco sat on a length of track within the building, with a wall on one side and the canal on the other. We could not load outside the building, and the only way of loading was to back a low loader into the shed and winch the loco on. However, the doorway was only 9 foot wide by thirteen foot high to the top of the arch.

Our old friends Cramscene provided a low loader that was all of three inches narrower than the doorway and low enough to (just) get the loco out, once on the trailer. The loco had stood in this shed for at least ten years, but moved surprisingly easily. In the end, the hardest task was getting the trailer into and out of the shed, as the tractor unit slipped on the wet ground at the entrance and was very difficult to position sufficiently accurately.

What will happen to this loco, which is Cockerill No.3083 of 1925, we haven't yet decided. Whilst it would be a fantastic idea to create Hugh Wainwright's railmotor scheme, we really do not have the necessary resources, financial or manpower, to undertake such a radical scheme. The loco itself is restorable and this may well be the route taken, albeit some considerable time in the future.

## FOOTPLATE COURSES

### Douglas Lovely

I refer to the article by Howard Bishop in Issue No.163 of *The Old Run* in which he mentions "Footplate Experience Courses" and the income that such peripheral activities generate. I offer the following proposals for your consideration:

1. The course should last for three days with three participants, hereinafter called "Students" and three appropriately qualified M.R.T. members hereinafter called the "Staff".

2. Day 1 - To consist of a series of short lectures:- Introduction and short history of the Middleton Railway

Locomotive:	Boiler and Firebox
	Injectors
	Front End
	Valve Gear
	Lubrication
	Braking System
Operation:	Staff Token
	Ground Frames and
	Turnouts
	Hand Signals
	Types of Couplings
	Coupling-up and
	Uncoupling
	Guards Duties

To perambulate the workshop and yard, to physically look at as many of the above items as possible, to operate the ground frame, practice hand signals and coupling and uncoupling of stock.

To look inside the smoke box, fire box of a locomotive, to stand on the footplate and note the fittings and to look at the wide variety of valve gears that we have.

Time required:	
13 lectures @ 20 mins	5hrs 25min.
2 Tea Breaks @ 20 mins	40min.
1 Lunch Break	45min.
Outside work	2hrs. 10min.
Total	9hrs. 00min.

3. Day 2 - To consist of a locomotive in steam and used only within the confines of the yard. The Students will prepare the locomotive i.e. light up, oil up and clean. Practice (one at a time)

starting, driving and stopping the locomotive at precise locations. Practice buffing up to a brake van. The student shall also fire the locomotive intermittently as required and operate the injector. There shall be two staff on the footplate at all times when the locomotive is in motion.

Time required:	
Preparation	3hrs. 00min.
3 students @ 40mins. each	2hrs. 00min.
Lunch	45min.
Disposal	45min.
Total	8hrs. 00min.

4. Day 3 - To consist of a locomotive in steam and a brake van for running a train to and from Park Halt. The students will carry out preparation and disposal of the locomotive as on Day 2 and will (one at a time) have 2 No. firing and 2 No. driving return journeys.

The other two students will ride in the brake van with a member of staff. One of these students will perform all the coupling and uncoupling, operation of the turnout under the supervision of the staff fireman and the other will carry out all the guards duties and operate the ground frames under the supervision of the staff guard. Again there shall be two staff on the footplate at all times as the locomotive is in motion.

Time required:	
3 students with 2 driving runs	
@ 30 mins.	3hrs. 00min.
3 students with 2 firing runs	
@ 30 mins	3hrs. 00min.
Preparation and Disposal	3hrs. 45min.
Coal up and water as required	15min.
Total	10hrs. 00min.

The students will be given question papers, probably in multiple choice format, to show the knowledge they have gained from Day 1. They can work on these during Day 2 when it is not their turn on the footplate, or in their spare time. These will be marked and returned to them.

5. If a micro-wave oven is available, then hot lunches may be able to be provided on Day 1 and Day 2. On Day 3 the students (and staff) will have to snatch their food whilst working, as we usually do.

6. Staff shall consist of a Driver, Fireman, Guard and perhaps someone to help with tea break and lunch facilities. One or more of these staff would be responsible for the lecturing.

7. Students would book on and off putting down their activity as "Classes". They will need membership of the M.R.T. and be suitably dressed. The M.R.T. would not necessarily provide the clothing.

8. The purpose of such a course would be to give the students some understanding of locomotive and train operating, and to provide just an insight into what working on the railway was like. The hands on activity should be just that, the staff only taking over the controls when essential. It may be considered to award some sort of certificate at the end of the course.

9. Time Table:  
Day 1 - Book on 09.00, book off 18.00 (9hrs. 00min.)  
Day 2 - Book on 09.00, book off 17.30 (8hrs. 30min.)  
Day 3 - Book on 08.00, book off 18.00 (10hrs. 00min.)

These days will need to be mid week, outside of the M.R.T. timetable, and preferably in the summer period, say on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Staffing would rely heavily on retired members running the course wherever possible.

10. I would imagine that the students would be charged at least £50 per day, plus £3.50 for lunch and teas, plus the membership dues for each student of £8.50, to give a total of £507.

If the course could be successfully operated for 10 weeks each year this would produce an annual income of £5070.

## **WILL THE INTRODUCTION OF A STEAM DRIVEN COMPUTER AT THE RAILWAY BE A CASE OF BYTE-ING OFF MORE THAN WE CAN CHOO CHOO?**

### **Martin Plumb**

Back in the dim and distant summer of 1993 when, incidentally, I was just a lad(!), I chanted the Middleton Railway promise to the assembled Council members and was duly invested as Traffic Manager. I then went home, full of youthful enthusiasm, and immediately started work on a computer program which would hopefully make life easier for me by taking care of some of the time-consuming duties such as the generation of the train crew roster. It wasn't long before the program was able to generate the roster at the drop of a hat (or, rather, the press of a key) but I would run the risk of a marital 'Form 1' if I tried to claim that it has

saved me time. In fact, I have spent so many evenings 'improving' the program and missed so many washing up turns as a consequence that it is highly unlikely that my hands will ever become as soft as my face! Just in case you're wondering why the program needed improving, the aim of the exercise has been to make it sufficiently 'user friendly' for use by working members at the Railway.

Although I have frequently discussed my plan (or vision?) with various colleagues at the Railway, I only recently discovered that some of my words had accidentally leaked on to the Moor Road grapevine, assembled themselves in different orders and caused unfounded, yet genuine, fears among some of my footplate colleagues. It was with great regret, therefore, that I had to turn down another washing up turn to write this explanation. Before starting, though, I would like to say that there is absolutely no truth in the rumours that my plans will result in either (a) people requiring computers at home (let alone ones that are connected to the Internet) to roster themselves or (b) the elimination of the roster entirely since all trains will be computer controlled! There are times, though, when I find myself rostered on 1210 *Sir Berkeley* in the pouring rain and I wish that I could drive it by remote control from the comfort of either the shed or, better still, my favourite armchair!

**New readers start here?:** To bring you up-to-date with the story so far, I am no longer the Traffic Manager, but I still produce the train crew roster on behalf of my successor, Neil Bentley. Neil has to keep a watchful eye on the roster just in case he needs to lean on people

to volunteer their services and, as well as receiving some help from me, he is aided and abetted by three 'roster clerks', in the shape of Ian Smith, Steve Roberts and Brian Wood, who twist the arms of drivers, firemen and guards respectively.

One of the problems with the roster on the notice board at the Railway is that we can only discover its current state by either going there and studying it or relying on there being someone at the Railway who can convey the information to us. We can therefore find ourselves wasting time and phone calls trying to find a volunteer for a turn that has already been filled or failing to find someone for a turn that has become vacant.

My intention is to install a computer in the Fred Youell Building, connect it to a telephone line, and use it to store the roster and associated information. It should then offer some advantages including the following:-

- The Traffic Manager and Roster Clerks will be able to 'view' and update the roster via their home computers at almost any time.
- Volunteers will be able to roster themselves without searching for a pen which is capable of writing on a vertical surface.
- The roster on the computer should be easier to read because it won't show the crossings out etc. - provided, of course, nobody makes the mistake of using correcting fluid on the screen :-)
- Unlike the paper roster, which displays turns for approximately two months, the one on the computer will know about the entire season and therefore allow people to roster themselves further in advance.

- Volunteers will be able to get a listing or print-out of their booked turns.

- If drivers will be kind enough to enter their mileage figures on the computer at the end of each turn, I will easily be able to compile the locomotive mileage details for the Mechanical Engineer.

- If anything goes wrong, we'll be able to blame it on the computer!

There will inevitably be some disadvantages too. For example, the steam driven nature of the computer will require us to roster a fireman to light it up each day several hours before it needs to be used. I am also aware of the fact that some of you may never have used a computer before and will, no doubt, view the change with some trepidation.

For that reason, there will be a 'honeymoon period' during which the paper roster will continue to be displayed behind a screen labelled, "In case of emergency, break glass"! However, there are no prizes for spotting that the use of two separate systems is likely to cause some confusion because of the need to copy things from the paper roster on to the computer and vice versa. For that reason, I would like you all to give the computer a try because, even if the procedure for placing your name on the roster seems tricky to master at first, it should soon become second nature.

There will be plenty of help available because I will provide a set of written instructions, and Peter Nettleton, Graham Parkin and Andrew Plumb have kindly agreed to help me man the 'Help Desk'. As more and more people gain confidence in using the

system, it should become easier to find someone who knows what they're doing.

If, at the end of the trial period agreed by Council, the computer is allowed to stay, I have some ideas for further developments. For example, people with computers at home could use them to update the roster. Perhaps the computer at the Railway could wake firemen with suitably timed alarm calls :-). I would hate any of you to become dizzy with excitement, so perhaps we should learn to walk before we try to run.

Finally, since most of you know that I spend much of my time 'wrestling' with computers at work, I will let you into the secret of Plumb's first law of computing which, incidentally, can be applied to other electronic gadgets such as photocopiers, fax machines etc. at no extra cost. It runs to several pages and is available from few leading newsagents, but can be summarised by saying that computers should be treated in the same way as fierce animals (especially dogs). When dealing with them, it is vital that you 'show no fear' because, if signs of nervousness appear, they'll have you :-). :-). means "Said with a smile"!

## FROM THE DESK OF THE MARKETING OFFICER

### Howard Bishop

I'm constructing these notes whilst on the last lap of an evaluation day on one of the other railways, courtesy of Richard B. After travelling from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Plymouth and back, I have to say that, contrary to popular misconceptions, the experience has been most positive and enjoyable! The trains were clean and well presented, the six sets of train staff were

welcoming, helpful and courteous, and the onboard catering was surprisingly good - much better than airline food. Apart from a three minute delay between York and Doncaster on the outward journey, which was recovered by Sheffield, caused by a slow running GNER train ahead, both journeys were on time! It could almost be a description of how we treat people on the Middleton Railway . . . "clean, well-presented, welcoming, helpful, friendly, on time"? As we begin another operating season I'm sure that this is how we would wish to be described.

This year, to attract visitors, we are capitalizing as never before on using local newspaper advertising and editorials in West and South Yorkshire. In addition we are using an array of free publicity afforded us by regional magazines such as *The Dalesman*, *Yorkshire Life*, and *Peak and Pennine*, as well as Teletext (p.443) and Ceefax (p.172), local radio, cable television, and so on. Thanks must go to those extra people who offered to help with the packing and distribution of leaflets this year, as well as the regulars. Their offers of help will be gladly made use of at some point during the year.

Now we need to ensure that all those extra visitors we are going to attract are adequately catered for, i.e. that we have sufficient staff on duty to cater for their needs and their visit is an enjoyable, welcoming and a positive experience. How about joining us in this important task?

## VIDEOS!

The Shop now has two Middleton videos on sale! The Pleasant Memories *Industrial Locos, Vol.2*, a popular item last year, is still on sale at £11.95, but has now been joined on the shelf by the Middleton Railway Trust video, priced

£10.95, which consists of *Yorkshire Steam*, a Channel 4 documentary based on the c.1990 York Circular Steam Special hauled by 4472 *Flying Scotsman*, with sections about Matthew Murray and the Middleton Railway, plus the half hour children's film *Fred the Steam Fugitive*, shot entirely at our Railway, using *Windle* as its hero *Fred Windle*.

Alex Hurd, whose firm - 'Pleasant Memories' - is hoping to produce another video volume on the Middleton Railway, for release in November, writes that "Perhaps other readers might search their attics for any further contributions in the way of ciné or early video not covered by the current video". He has no authentic shots of *Harry* in action or the very brief appearance of *Arthur* in its first (and last so far) appearance in steam at Middleton. Already copied for the new video is film of *Windle*, No.6, *Henry de Lacy II*, 1310 and 54 in steam, and of 2003 (*John Blenkinsop*) being delivered, together with topographical shots of the motorway being built, the GN bridge being demolished, and the Colliery site before it was 'landscaped' with baled refuse.

Alex's address is Pleasant House, 30 Station Road, Reepham, Lincolnshire, LN3 4DN. Tel. (01522) 750057. (It's usually not wise to consign one's only irreplaceable copy of something to the postal system, but I'm sure anyone not wishing to post their treasures could arrange to meet Alex at the line when he next visits.)

## MEMORIES OF 7051 - the answers!

Mr. John Whelan, who wrote the Winter issue article about 7051's early life, asked if members knew what a '728 man' was, and what was the vitally

necessary '108'. Answers came there none, right or wrong, so here they are:

'728' was an early 1930's pay award clause, applied by some railway companies to their fitters. It set shed fitters above most of the works fitters in the pay structure, and they were henceforward known as '728 men'.

The '108' was a double ended spanner, one end of which was just the right size for adjusting the brake lever on the early Hunslet diesels. As in 7051, the brake lever was high up, and each driver had to readjust it to his own 'reach', to make life more comfortable. The 108 spanner was an indispensable part of any driver's toolkit. They always had at least one 108 available, and often took great pride in keeping them highly polished.

## OBITUARY - Alfred Eachus

Alfred Eachus passed away peacefully in hospital on May 1st, aged 86, and his funeral service took place at Rawdon Crematorium on Friday May 7th. He had been an MRT member for a number of years, and I recall bringing him to the Railway a few years ago to enable him to hand over to a delighted Nigel Crowther a box of assorted small tools, one of which Nigel said would be very useful to facilitate repairs to a *Mirvale* injector.

Alfred served his time as an apprentice at Crewe locomotive works in the 1930's, and recalled the preparation of *Royal Scot* for its American tour in 1933. He later worked at Holbeck shed, apart from war work on aircraft at the Avro Yeadon factory. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his wife Mary and his family.

Derek T. Plummer



## EVERYTHING STOPS FOR TEA, EVEN THE APRIL *THOMAS* EVENT



*Thomas's crew* (left upper - Photo: Ian Dobson), Brian Hall on Nr.385 (left lower), and Stan & Carole Holdsworth in the Shop (above), all enjoy a well-earned cuppa. (Photos: Keith Hartley)

## TIMES PAST - Spring 1783

### Frank Poskett

*The Leeds Mercury* Tuesday 17th June 1783

Last Friday at Middleton Colliery, near this town, a great misfortune happened, by which seven men and two boys lost their lives.-We are credibly informed, that this sad disaster was occasioned by some foul or stagnated air unsuspectedly lodging in some part of the workings, which it being necessary to open into, to let off some water, the foul air took fire at the workmen's candle, though at a great distance, which caused a small explosion or two, by which four of the above men were killed; the other five had no marks of fire or violence about them, but were suffocated or stifled by endeavouring to escape through the sulphurous stife or damp left behind. Eight men made their escape, though with great difficulty, and say, that if they had all staid in their holes till the foul air had cleared itself, they believe none would have suffered but the first mentioned four. But does not such a belief or supposition imply a looking to second causes, and not to the Omnipotent Disposer of all events? However, be that as it may, it will be well if such a stroke teach their surviving brother colliers, as well as all others, to use their best endeavours in preparing for so sudden and tremendous a call!

I was manager at Middleton Colliery around 1950. The colliery shafts were in a valley, and from this valley an old disused rail track led up into the main road, near Middleton Church, where Hilda and I lived with our family; my under manager, Mr. Mark Kinsey, resided nearby.

It was late September 1951; we were walking home together along this old rail track - Rope Hill, and at a point approximately 50/60 yards from the shafts, there was a sealed off entrance to a Day Hole Drift which led, in its working days, to the underground workings. I heard an unusual sound almost like a child crying: not crying in a temper or in an effort to get its own way or arouse sympathy from its parent as children often do, but a wailing cry as if in pain, or distressed. I find it difficult to identify this sound: I had often heard my children cry, but this cry or sound was something unusual, but nevertheless a cry of despair as if from the voice of a child.

I said to Mark "Do you hear a wailing sound like a child crying?" "Yes" said Mark "I and many others for many years have heard this sound. Local people are convinced that it is the cries of very young boys and girls killed in 1783 by a series of explosions"

Records in the church show many of the dead were boys and girls: some only five years of age. Also, mothers of these children were killed. Men took their wives and children down the mine to help in the transport of coal in small tubs and sledges. These unfortunate explosions were common in those days, and hundreds of young boys, girls and women were killed by them, in addition to the men. Worse still, many of the victims were so poor that after some explosions they were left buried in the mine because the families could not afford a coffin and the cost of a burial. Many coal owners would not pay wages for the recovery of bodies, but some were 'generous' and supplied a coffin made of good stout timber. In Yorkshire, the sturdy lasses were sometimes employed in getting coal itself, plying the pick like ordinary colliers. Public opinion put pressure on the government, and an Act of Parliament known as 'Lord Ashley's Act' was passed, coming into force on 1st March 1843, and excluding all women and girls, and boys under 10 years old, from working underground.

If one does not believe in Ghosts! the wailing noise which I heard was made under certain conditions by the movement of air under pressure in a restricted area. It is not easy to completely seal off a roadway leading from the surface to existing underground workings. The leakage of air coming out on to the surface could well make a noise of some sort, depending on the difference of pressure in the atmosphere between two places at different levels. A good musician would have the skill to produce on a wind instrument a noise like a "wailing or crying child". The wailing could be an atmospheric noise of which there are many as the wind passes through trees, or around a building.

Facts are facts: explosions took place in 1783 and many were killed. If one believes in Ghosts! evidence was there over 168 years before. The sound of "wailing crying children".

[As Mr. Poskett mentioned, he was manager of Middleton Broom Colliery for a few years around 1950. He is currently writing a book about his experiences as a Yorkshire colliery manager. Mr. Poskett has many tales to tell about Middleton, including the taking underground of the first diesel locomotive unit to be used in the Broom Pit: the 'cage' was removed from the pit shaft, and the loco was let down in a sling in just the same way that new pit ponies were taken into a mine. He was always somewhat bemused by the fact that one of the mine passages at Broom Pit was lined out with nice white tiles for quite some way from the shaft (presumably these were products of the Middleton Fireclay Company, part of the pre-nationalisation Middleton Estates and Colliery Company). Around 1950, Mr. Poskett gave instructions for an overgrown area near the Fireclay sidings turnout to be tidied up, and was later called for to go look at what had been found under the build-up of earth, rubbish and undergrowth:- a whole length of 1812 Blenkinsop rack railway!

Mr. Poskett's forthcoming book should certainly be very worth reading by anyone interested in the almost vanished industry for which our Railway was originally built.]

## THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST LIMITED

(Limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

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## REMAINING SPECIAL EVENTS IN 1999

**POSTMAN PAT** Sunday June 6

**OPEN DAY** [demonstrations, guided tours etc.] Sunday June 20

**TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC** Sunday August 1

**STEAM GALA** Saturday and Sunday September 25 and 26

**SANTA TRAINS** December 4, 5, 11, 12, 18 & 19

Special Events trains usually operate every 30 minutes from 10.30 to 16.30. Please ring the Shop prior to the event for further information of prices etc.



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